

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: *Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, WT Docket No. 17-79

Today's item represents a first step in an extensive series of actions that the Commission will have to take to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is deployed to deliver next generation wireless services to the American consumer. While an item eliminating historic preservation review for replacement poles certainly does not fix the entirety of the problem, it should reduce some processing delays, along with the total amount of fees that providers are paying to get the necessary approvals for infrastructure siting.

The draft that was circulated and posted three weeks ago sent a message that the Commission was getting to work on these issues; however, it became apparent that the item may not have reflected how replacement poles were sited and, therefore, did not do as much as we had hoped. For example, replacement poles are not placed in the exact same location as the original pole. Instead, it is placed next to it, so that electrical wires and other attachments can be transferred over. Let's face it, no one wants electrical wiring just lying on the ground. Further, to hold the load of additional equipment, poles often need to be increased in size and the material of the pole sometimes needs to be changed from wood to metal.

The item we are voting on today takes into account these realities. Replacement poles that are within ten feet of the original will be excluded from historic preservation review, provided that they are in previously disturbed ground. And, the ground in most rights-of-way has been repeatedly disturbed. This also has the added benefit of allowing providers the ability to increase the circumference of their poles. Further, a replacement pole that is five feet taller than the original and changes in materials, as long as they are consistent in appearance and quality, are also exempted from review. While I would have preferred that a replacement pole could be increased in size by 10 feet without going through historic preservation review, allowing five additional feet is an improvement from the circulated draft.

I appreciate Commissioner Carr's leadership on infrastructure deployment and the Chairman's and my colleagues' willingness to accept my suggestions to provide additional flexibility to wireless providers. I approve, and I look forward to future items that will tackle additional infrastructure issues, such as twilight towers, the tribal review process, and permitting and zoning delays and fees. Hopefully, relief in these areas is soon to come.